



For immediate release

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Mayor launches tax credit help for low-income families

Free tax prep services help low- and moderate-income earners keep more of what they earn

SEATTLE — Mayor Greg Nickels launched a campaign today to support the most effective federally-sponsored anti-poverty program in the nation with United Way of King County President and CEO Jon Fine, and dozens of program volunteers and clients.

The Fourth Annual King County Earned-Income Tax Credit Campaign offers free tax-preparation services by trained volunteers for residents across the county. Focusing on low- and moderate-income families and individuals, the EITC volunteers provide walk-in service to people who need help filing basic tax returns. The average EITC benefit to eligible filers — \$1,700 — is used by recipients to get ahead and, in some cases, avoid homelessness.

“People use their EITC benefit not only for immediate needs like food and bills, but to reduce debt, pay school tuition, and make deposits on housing,” Nickels said. “Last year we helped over 4,500 people claim more than \$5.8 million in tax refunds, including nearly \$2 million from EITC. Yet, more than \$35 million in EITC is available each year in Seattle and King County. We need to get the word out to help even more people.”

“United Way of King County sponsors this program because we understand the importance of connecting the working poor with the resources they need to maximize their income tax refunds,” said Fine. “Twenty-seven percent of families eligible for the EITC in King County are not claiming it. Let’s all work together to help bring these additional dollars to the deserving residents of this region.”

Tax preparation services in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian and Samoan will be provided by Americorps, AARP and other volunteers until April 15 at 13 sites in Bellevue, Beacon Hill, Burien, the Central District, Rainier Beach, downtown Seattle, White Center, Renton, Kent, SeaTac International Airport and Federal Way.

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All people needing help with basic tax preparation and electronic filing of tax returns are welcome at the tax sites. To be eligible for the EITC, filers must have worked in 2005 and have a Social Security number. Families with two or more children who earned less than \$35,263 in 2005 can receive an EITC credit of up to \$4,400, families with one child who made less than \$31,030 can get a credit of up to \$2,662, and childless families earning less than \$11,750 can get a credit of up to \$399.

The EITC campaign and affiliated programs also help clients open bank accounts, sign up for financial education classes, connect with public benefits for which they may be eligible, and learn more about reducing debt, building better credit and planning a financial future. For more information about the King County EITC Campaign, visit www.uwkc.org.

Also today, a new name was unveiled by Nickels for one of the EITC affiliated programs. The City of Seattle-sponsored program called Help for Working Families is now called PeoplePoint: Bridge to Benefits. Both city and Public Health-Seattle and King County staff work for PeoplePoint, providing one-stop, customer-focused eligibility review and enrollment in multiple benefit programs including child care, energy and utilities, food and health insurance.

In 2005, PeoplePoint (then Help for Working Families) enrolled nearly 5,000 people in public benefit programs, valued at nearly \$7.5 million. For more information about PeoplePoint: Bridge to Benefits, call 206-684-0355.

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